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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor : T. SHIMOMURA, et al.

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Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, DC 20231

Art Unit : 2872

Examiner : F. Ass

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**INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
UNDER 37 CFR § 1.97(c)(1) 1.97(e)(1) and §1.98**

S I R:

This information Disclosure Statement is being filed pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.97(c)(1), (i.e., after the mailing of a First Office Action on the merits). The attention of the Patent and Trademark Office is hereby directed to the references listed on the attached form PTO-1449. One copy of each reference is attached. It is respectfully requested that the information be expressly considered during the prosecution of this application, and that the reference(s) be made of record therein and appear among the "References Cited" on any patent to issue therefrom. U.S. Patent 6,255,031 corresponds to WO 97/38855.

The references were cited in a European Search Report dated April 16, 2002, a copy of which is also enclosed.

CERTIFICATION UNDER 37 CFR § 1.97(e)(1)

Each item listed on attached form PTO-1449 was cited in a communication from a foreign Patent Office (EPO) on a counterpart foreign application not more than three months prior to the filing of this Information Disclosure Statement. Therefore, it is believed that no fee is required with this Information Disclosure Statement. The Commissioner however, is authorized to charge any fees required in connection with this communication or credit any overpayment, to deposit account number 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: May 17, 2002

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